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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [KISL](#) [KPAO](#) [EAID](#) [TP](#) [RP](#)  
SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR'S VISIT SUPPORTS ENVIRONMENTALLY PROGRESSIVE  
PROVINCE

11. SUMMARY: The Ambassador's April 24, 2009, trip to Puerto Princesa, Palawan, emphasized the positive effects its environmentally friendly practices are having on quality of life and the local economy. The Ambassador also underscored the important role the province plays in regional security. Highlights of the trip included a tour of the city's Baywalk with the Mayor, a visit to a Peace Corps site on Coastal Resource Management, and observation of the construction of a USG-funded maritime police unit. The Ambassador also toured a local weaving business run by an International Visitor Leadership Program alumna and was briefed by the Western Command of the Armed Forces of the Philippines. The Ambassador concluded the day by reaching young audiences interested in environmental issues through a regional FM radio interview. The trip was widely covered by regional print and broadcast media. END SUMMARY

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Background: Puerto Princesa, Palawan  
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12. Puerto Princesa, the Philippines' "Most Environmentally Friendly Port," is the capital of the province of Palawan. It is one of the country's largest cities in area, and is the Philippines' number one tourist destination for international travelers. The creation and enforcement of laws banning dynamite fishing, large-scale mining, carbon monoxide emitting tricycles, and littering have helped to boost its status in the arena of environmentally progressive destinations.

13. The western location and proximity of Palawan to Malaysia and Indonesia makes it a focal point in the Philippines' efforts to deter terrorism, drug smuggling, and human trafficking. The province is key to U.S. efforts to enhance peace, stability, and development in the region.

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USG PROJECT PROVIDES REGIONAL SECURITY  
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14. In 2006, Embassy Manila partnered with the Philippine National Police (PNP) and the City of Puerto Princesa to fund a project to develop a small maritime law enforcement unit with intercept capability. To date, the USG has donated \$550,000 to the project, which is now 70 percent complete. The Ambassador toured the construction site of the PNP Maritime Group Special Boat Unit (MSBU) and confirmed that USG funds are being well used. The PNP has recruited and trained 97 new personnel to staff the MSBU, provided weapons, and pledged \$500,000 for fuel and maintenance costs. Later this year, the Embassy will donate four sophisticated patrol boats to the unit. Due to Palawan's western location, the addition of a maritime law enforcement unit will serve to increase Philippine national security.

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IVLP ALUM STIMULATES LOCAL ECONOMY  
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15. A 2007 participant in the U.S. International Visitor Leadership Program for the Small Business Development Program of the Department now provides over 60 "green" jobs at her weaving facility, stimulating the city's local economy. The company uses natural raw materials that would normally be considered waste to create their products. The Ambassador toured the facility.

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PEACE CORPS PRESERVES AND PROVIDES JOBS  
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16. The Ambassador visited a Peace Corps Coastal Resource Management site in Puerto Princesa that is providing work for female fisherfolk through a cooperative that preserves natural resources with its fish sanctuary. The site encourages women fisherfolk to prevent their spouses from engaging in destructive fishing practices. The Ambassador met with Peace Corps Volunteers, observed the local women processing fish and seaweed, and then participated in preparing seaweed for drying.

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VISIT WITH THE "GREEN" MAYOR  
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17. The Ambassador began her visit with a courtesy call on the Mayor of Puerto Princesa, Edward Hagedorn. During discussions at City Hall, the Ambassador expressed her support of the Mayor's green policies and efforts to promote sustainable eco-tourism. Together, the Ambassador and Mayor Hagedorn toured the city's new Baywalk area. The Baywalk is an example of how a cleaner environment can promote tourism and improve quality of life.

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WESCOM IS A MODEL OF COORDINATION AND NEUTRALITY  
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18. During a visit to the Western Command (WESCOM) headquarters of the Armed Forces of the Philippines, the Ambassador emphasized the critical partnership between the Philippines and the United States. Underscoring the importance of the armed forces remaining neutral in politics and elections, she also noted the key role that WESCOM plays in stabilizing and protecting its region of the Philippines. The WESCOM security brief chronicled the command's efforts to secure the western border of the Philippines, which includes the newly claimed Kalayaan Island Group, a group potentially rich with oil and natural resources. The Ambassador commended the WESCOM's inter-branch coordination efforts.

KENNEY